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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1233 (1999) RELATIVE TO THE SITUATION IN GUINEA-BISSAU

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999) of 6 April 1999, by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed and to submit a report to it by 30 June 1999 and every 90 days thereafter on developments in Guinea-Bissau, the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) and the implementation of the Abuja Agreement (S/1998/1028, annex), including the implementation of its mandate by the Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1233 (1999), the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ibrahima Fall, has briefed the Council on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, on 22 April and on 12 May 1999. Mr. Fall's briefing of 12 May concentrated mainly on events surrounding the ouster from power, on 7 May, of former President Vieira by forces of the self-proclaimed junta. The present report covers the latest developments in Guinea-Bissau, focusing on the role that the United Nations should play in the peace-building process in Guinea-Bissau in view of the changed situation on the ground.

II. EVENTS PRIOR TO 7 MAY 1999

3. In my report to the Council of 17 March 1999 (S/1999/294), I expressed the hope that the parties to the Abuja Agreement would translate into concrete measures the commitments they had undertaken under the Agreement. I pointed out that the significant actions they had taken, at that time, towards the implementation of that Agreement, including the establishment of the Government of National Unity and the deployment of ECOMOG, were steps in the right direction.

4. Encouraged by the positive developments in the country, the international community demonstrated its willingness to support both ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau and peace-building efforts by the Government of National Unity. To that end, at

a meeting organized by the Secretariat at Headquarters on 20 April, at the request of the Council under its resolution 1233 (1999), donors pledged assistance for ECOMOG. Those pledges were reaffirmed on 5 May at Geneva, following the urgent round-table conference, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, convened on 4 May also at Geneva, to assist the Government of Guinea-Bissau in its reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. At the round-table conference, pledges amounting to some $200 million were made to cover activities in the areas of consolidation of peace and democracy, elections, demobilization and reinsertion of ex-combatants into civilian life, mine clearance and reunification of the armed forces.

5. Meanwhile, on 30 April, following consultations with the Security Council, I appointed Samuel Nana-Sinkam of Cameroon as my Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau. Mr. Nana-Sinkam participated in the Geneva donor meetings on 4 and 5 May and made his first contacts with senior Guinea-Bissau authorities, including Prime Minister Fadul, on that occasion.

III. EVENTS OF 7 MAY AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PEACE PROCESS

6. Members of the Council will recall that the Assistant Secretary-General, in his briefing of 12 May, updated the Council on the sudden and unexpected turn of events which culminated, on 7 May, in President Vieira's ouster from office.

7. Following the events of 7 May, Prime Minister Fadul confirmed that legislative and presidential elections would proceed on 28 November 1999, as announced by President Vieira before his removal from office. On 14 May, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Malam Bacai Sanha, was inaugurated as interim President until new elections are held.

8. To address the changed situation in Guinea-Bissau, the ECOWAS Minister for Foreign Affairs held a meeting at Lomé on 24 and 25 May, at the end of which, in a final communiqué, the Ministers, among other things, (a) condemned the 7 May coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau; and (b) agreed that, in view of new developments on the ground and difficulties encountered in financing their operations, ECOMOG troops would be withdrawn from Guinea-Bissau, despite the request of the Government of National Unity to the contrary. The Ministers also requested the new leadership to grant safe passage to President Vieira and his family from the Embassy of Portugal, where they had found refuge, to any country of their choice.

IV. CURRENT SITUATION

9. Members of the Council will recall that, in my statement of 11 May, I stated that, in view of the events of 7 May, I had decided to review options available to the United Nations with regard to the peace process in Guinea-Bissau. Accordingly, a small mission from the Department of Political Affairs visited the country from 10 to 12 June to assess the situation on the ground and to define the role that the United Nations should play in the light of the changed circumstances on the ground. During its stay in Bissau, the

mission met with interim President Sanha, Prime Minister Fadul, General Mane, representatives of the diplomatic community and of civil society and political parties, as well as with heads of United Nations organizations operating in Guinea-Bissau. The mission reported on various aspects of the current situation as follows:

A. Political aspects

10. Following the events of 7 May and the withdrawal of ECOMOG, it is generally recognized that the Abuja Agreement is no longer applicable.

11. The designation of the former President of the National Assembly, Malam Bacai Sanha, as interim President has been widely accepted by the population. Augusto Cabral D'Almada replaced him as the Assembly President. The military junta leader, General Mane, and other national leaders have publicly affirmed that the current appointments are temporary until a new Government is elected.

12. The political debate is currently focused on the future of former President Vieira. While many in Guinea-Bissau would like the former President to stand trial for alleged corruption and other crimes, they reluctantly accepted the Government's decision to let President Vieira leave the country for medical reasons.

13. As the country seeks to restore internal harmony, it has also sought to further improve relations with the international community, in particular with its neighbours. Official delegations from Guinea-Bissau have recently travelled abroad to explain recent developments, stressing their determination to pursue efforts to restore lasting peace and constitutional order and appealing for support to that end. In this connection, the Government has also sought to reassure those countries whose nationals and property were affected by the events of 7 May in Bissau.

14. Meanwhile, and despite meagre resources, civil society in Guinea-Bissau continues to play a constructive role in seeking and sustaining peace, in particular by organizing seminars and sensitization programmes promoting peace, democracy, national reconciliation and the rule of law.

B. Military and security aspects

15. The Government delegation at the ECOWAS ministerial meeting at Lomé on 24 and 25 May tried unsuccessfully to have the other ECOWAS member States agree to maintain ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau until new elections. With the withdrawal of the ECOMOG interposition force, some of the tasks previously assigned to that force under the Abuja Agreement are now operationally obsolete. Guinea-Bissau forces have taken over the task of providing security throughout the country. The authorities are in the process of drafting an official strategy and programmes for arms collection and disposal, as well as for restructuring and reorganizing the armed forces.

16. Despite occasional incidents, the security situation is generally stable, but concern continues to be expressed about the large number of weapons circulating widely in the country, in particular small arms.

C. Electoral aspects

17. All parties concerned reaffirmed to the mission their commitment to holding legislative and presidential elections as scheduled on 28 November 1999. The National Electoral Commission, despite a paucity of resources, is intensifying its technical preparations for the forthcoming elections. It has prepared an electoral calender and reaffirmed its commitment to adhere to it. To assist the Commission, the United Nations has recruited a chief technical adviser, who is expected to arrive in the country early in July. Meanwhile, a legal framework for the elections, including a new Constitution, is being debated in the National Assembly and is expected to be adopted soon.

D. Human rights and humanitarian aspects

18. According to civil society groups active in promoting respect for human rights in Guinea-Bissau, the situation in this domain appears to be improving. Government authorities have indicated that a large number of troops and militia who had supported former President Vieira have already been released. Another large group was released as expected, on 23 June.

19. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian situation in the country remains serious, largely because of delays in the delivery of assistance, accumulated since the events of 7 May. Approximately 60,000 internally displaced persons still remain outside of the capital. While refugees are slowly beginning to return home, their return might further strain the already limited food capacity of their communities. The continuing humanitarian needs, especially in the sectors of agriculture, health, mine awareness, water and sanitation and education, remain underfunded.

V. UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN GUINEA-BISSAU

20. Members of the Council will recall that I had decided, following consultations with the Council, to set up a United Nations Peace-building Office in Guinea-Bissau, headed by my Representative in that country, for the purpose of contributing to the restoration of peace and stability in that country. The mandate of that Office, outlined in document S/1999/232, was as follows:

(a) To help create an enabling environment for restoring and consolidating peace, democracy and the rule of law and for the organization of free and transparent elections;

(b) To work with the Government of National Unity, ECOWAS and ECOMOG, as well as with other national and international partners, to facilitate the implementation of the Abuja Agreement;

(c) To seek the commitment of the Government and other parties to adopt a programme of voluntary arms collection, disposal and destruction;

(d) To provide the political framework and leadership for harmonizing and integrating the activities of the United Nations system in the country, particularly during the transitional period leading up to general and presidential elections.

21. The assessment mission dispatched to Guinea-Bissau from 10 to 12 June reported that, despite the events of 7 May and the changed circumstances on the ground, the overall mandate of UNOGBIS remained valid. Some of the aspects of that mandate would, however, need to be adjusted. Accordingly, as I proposed to the President of the Security Council in my letter to him dated 28 June 1999 (S/1999/737), the mandate of UNOGBIS should be revised as follows:

(a) To help create an enabling environment for restoring, maintaining and consolidating peace, democracy and the rule of law and for the organization of free and transparent elections (same as in the original mandate, except for the addition of the word "maintaining");

(b) To actively support national efforts, including those of civil society, towards national reconciliation, tolerance and peaceful management of differences, particularly during the transitional period (new);

(c) To encourage initiatives aimed at building confidence and maintaining friendly relations between Guinea-Bissau, its neighbours and its international partners (new);

(d) To seek the commitment of the Government and other parties to adopt a programme of voluntary arms collection, disposal, and destruction (original mandate);

(e) To provide the political framework and leadership for harmonizing and integrating the activities of the United Nations system in the country, particularly during the transitional period leading up to general and presidential elections (original mandate).

22. Throughout the regrettable period of tension and conflict that has characterized the situation in Guinea-Bissau in the past year, the international community has shown its consideration and concern for the country's plight and interest in contributing to efforts to meet both humanitarian needs and long-term requirements for the restoration of peace and stability. It is against this background and taking into account the request from the Government that I have dispatched my Representative in Guinea-Bissau to take up his duties, including setting up UNOGBIS.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

23. The post-conflict situation in Guinea-Bissau remains complex. The events of 7 May have affected and altered the pace and nature of the peace process. They have also created a measure of disappointment among those at home and

abroad who recalled the commitment made by former President Vieira and General Mane never again to resort to arms to settle their differences. The events have also raised concern and questions about the country's commitment to reconciliation and restoration of order. Above all, the killings and destruction that accompanied that turn of events have created bitterness, especially among those whose nationals and property were hurt during those events.

24. I am, nevertheless, encouraged by the stated commitment of the transitional authorities to the objective of restoring genuine and lasting peace based on national reconciliation, respect for the rule of law and the return to constitutional order. Translating these commitments into concrete actions would help encourage the international community to review favourably its support for Guinea-Bissau as the country seeks to rebuild.

25. As part of the United Nations contribution to the restoration and consolidation of peace, it is my intention to set up a trust fund in support of the activities of UNOGBIS. Should the Security Council concur, I shall, in due course, appeal to Member States to contribute to that fund.

26. Finally, I should like once again to commend the dedication, courage and professionalism shown by ECOMOG troops in the discharge of their mandate during their brief tenure. I should like also to express my appreciation to those Member States whose material and financial support made the deployment and subsequent withdrawal of ECOMOG possible.